



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 17 March 2020

DOMESTIC ABUSE UPDATE

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on activity to improve the provision of support to children, adults and families affected by domestic abuse. The report considers progress at both strategic and operational levels.

This matter affects all Wards within the borough.

This report does not relate to a key decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Scrutiny Committee is requested to:

1. Note the progress made since November 2019 to improve services for children, adults and families affected by domestic abuse.
2. Support an extension of the timescales previously proposed to launch a new borough-wide partnership strategy for domestic abuse in order to enable meaningful co-production to take place (extending from April 2020 to September 2020).
3. Note that co-production of the partnership strategy will delay timescales for reviewing commissioning arrangements and developing a detailed training programme. Activity to improve services will continue throughout and be reported on a regular basis.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 At the Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 11 November 2019 an outline of planned activity for November 2019 to March 2020 was presented. Progress has been made across all areas which is detailed in the following report.
- 1.2 It was agreed at the meeting of 11 November 2019 that the new strategy for domestic abuse should be co-produced. It is highlighted by national bodies and research agencies, such as the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), that co-production can lead to better services for people, improved relationships at community level, better collaboration between organisations and contribute to financial savings. Most importantly, co-production creates a different relationship between those providing and receiving services, one based on the following principles:
- (i) Equality- everyone has something to give and no person or organisation is more important than others;
 - (ii) Diversity- it should be easy for everyone to be part of co-production and it is important to include everyone; and
 - (iii) Access- it should be easy for everyone to take part in co-production activity.
- 1.3 It is recognised that meaningful co-production takes time and can be more challenging for public services that traditionally have taken the lead in producing and promoting local strategies. It was originally proposed that a new multi-agency strategy for domestic abuse would be launched in April 2020, immediately replacing the *Zero Tolerance to Domestic Abuse* strategy linked to the Wirral Plan 2020. In taking a co-production approach it is anticipated that the new strategy would not be launched until September 2020. In April 2020 a vision and set of key principles, devised through current co-production activity, will be published from which the detail of the strategy will be developed.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The alternative option is not to use a co-production approach and to produce a service-led strategy for domestic abuse, based on the views, experiences and knowledge of professionals only. This would enable the original timescales for launch of a new strategy to be met but would significantly compromise the content, purpose and value of the strategy. The multi-agency partnership recommends that co-production is used to ensure a meaningful and purposeful product is achieved which will lead to improved outcomes for those affected by domestic abuse.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Update on co-producing the new domestic abuse strategy

Three key groups have been identified for co-production:

- People affected by domestic abuse- victims, perpetrators, children and young people, friends and family members, and employers
- Those working with people affected by domestic abuse- professionals and volunteers
- Officers with responsibility for the provision of local services- most notably, Children’s Services, Adult Health and Care Services, NHS, Merseyside Police, Public Health and the Probation Service

All three groups are currently engaged in establishing an understanding of our current position- it’s strengths, weaknesses, and priorities for improvement.

3.2 On 15 January 2020, the first workshop was held with over 40 multi-agency officers with responsibility for the provision of local services. High level feedback from the workshop was:

- There is greater awareness of domestic abuse as a result of the work done under the Wirral Plan pledge;
- The phrase *zero tolerance to domestic abuse* has not been effective in some communities as people interpret it as an ‘all or nothing’, binary approach which deters some victims from wanting to make disclosures or ask for help;
- Interventions from statutory services are improving but there is a lack of early intervention due to rigid thresholds;
- Whole family approaches are required to break the cycle;
- There are different visions and thresholds across agencies;
- More understanding is needed on the experience and journey through services for those affected by domestic abuse;
- Accessibility for those who want to self-refer is a barrier;
- Domestic abuse can be extremely complex and there is a need to identify and upskill ‘experts’ across agencies;
- Training for domestic abuse awareness raising is good but there is a lack of training about how to work with people affected by domestic abuse: professionals and volunteers can identify signs of domestic abuse but are then unsure of what to do about it;
- There is a lack of confidence in understanding what our performance data tells us and how useful it is; and
- Commissioning arrangements need to be reviewed to ensure we are maximising available funds to deliver the right support to the right people.

3.3 Having gathered the views of officers responsible for the provision of local services, consultation is now taking place with professionals, volunteers and people affected by domestic abuse to ascertain their views on the current position. Feedback is being collected, by a range of partners and agencies in relation to the following:

Group	Prompts
People affected by domestic abuse	What support or help has worked well for you or made a positive difference? What hasn’t worked well for you or has made things more difficult? We want to improve our services, do you have

	<p>any suggestions about what could be done to improve services for people affected by domestic abuse?</p> <p>Are there any key messages you would like to give to services, professionals, Councillors, people who fund services?</p> <p>Do you have any key messages for other people affected by domestic abuse?</p>
Professionals and volunteers	<p>What do you think our partnership strengths are in supporting people affected by domestic abuse?</p> <p>What do you think we should do to improve services for people affected by domestic abuse?</p> <p>As a professional/volunteer working with people affected by domestic abuse what would help you to be more confident and effective in your role?</p> <p>Are there any key messages you would like to share with other professionals?</p> <p>Are there any key messages you would like to give to services, professionals, Councillors, people who fund services?</p>

3.4 The multi-agency group of officers responsible for the provision of local services will meet in March 2020 to consider the feedback from the prompts above. The objective of the workshop will be to collate the views of all parties which then informs a draft vision statement, key principles and identify priority workstreams for co-production.

3.5 The draft vision, key principles and priority workstreams will be presented at a stakeholder event in April 2020. The event will bring together the three co-production groups with the expectation they statements are finalised, endorsed and arrangements/membership for workstreams, involving all parties, are agreed. This will provide the information required to develop an overarching domestic abuse action plan.

3.6 **Update on progress to improve domestic abuse support and services**

At the Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 11 November 2019 an outline of planned activity for November 2019 to March 2020 was presented. An update on each activity is provided below.

3.7 Daily domestic abuse meetings

The daily domestic abuse meetings started in November 2019. Since then there have been 183 cases presented. The meeting is attended by Children's Services, health representatives for children and adults, Merseyside Police, Probation Service, Family Safety Unit and Safer Wirral Hub. Early indications, gathered from audit, suggest that there is effective multi-agency information sharing and decision making. Actions are agreed and shared with the onward agency to ensure risk management and safety planning is implemented.

3.8 Early learning from the daily domestic abuse meetings suggest that more referrals could benefit from early help services. The Heads of Service for the Integrated Front Door and Family Matters are working together to ensure that this provision is available. All case workers in Family Matters are trained to deliver the Gateway domestic abuse programme for groups and on a 1:1 basis, and could provide much needed support to families that do not meet the threshold for statutory intervention or support from an IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate).

3.9 Integration of the Family Safety Unit and Early Intervention Team

Previously the Family Safety Unit sat under the line management of the Safer Wirral Hub, whilst the Early Intervention Team reported into Early Help & Prevention Services. New arrangements mean that both teams have the same reporting lines, through the Head of Service Integrated Front Door to the Assistant Director: Early Help & Prevention, who has the strategic lead for services to support people affected by domestic abuse. The teams are currently based at Solar Campus and will be co-located to the domestic abuse hub in spring 2020. With consistent line management, regular team meetings and appropriate supervision, integrated working with increase leading to improved co-ordination of services for Wirral residents. Development sessions have been held with staff and a schedule for service improvement is in place.

3.10 Service specification for a domestic abuse hub

A service specification for the domestic abuse hub has been drafted. It provides a clear outline of roles and responsibilities for staff and agencies who will operate from the hub. Consultation with staff and partners is underway. Approval for the service specification will be provided by the multi-agency partnership group, taking into account learning from the co-production exercise.

3.11 Governance arrangements for domestic abuse

Governance for domestic abuse has been reviewed and is detailed within Appendix 1- Governance arrangements for domestic abuse. The Officer responsible for Safeguarding Adults and Independent Chair of the Merseyside Safeguarding Adults Partnership will agree detailed governance arrangements.

3.12 Review of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

The MARAC is a partnership forum which aims to provide oversight for cases assessed as high risk and is attended by frontline practitioners and operational managers. The MARAC steering group, with membership at strategic and senior level, has been engaged in reviewing the existing arrangements and producing an action plan for improvement. A focus day for the MARAC steering group on 23 January 2020, has identified a number of key areas for improvement, including:

- Capturing the voice of the victim;
- Safety planning when the victim and perpetrator choose to stay together;
- Managing the volume of cases presented to MARAC;
- Administration of MARAC;
- MARAC effectiveness being compromised when there is lack of engagement from the victim;
- Improving the information system and information sharing through technology;
- and

- Approaches to working with repeat cases.

An action plan is being developed, with support being provided from a Performance Improvement Officer. The action plan will be signed off by the MARAC Steering Group and shared as soon as possible.

3.13 Reviewing the training offer

It is advised that the training offer is reviewed following full feedback from the co-production activity. It is anticipated that professionals and volunteers will request a multiagency training programme which provides tiered levels of training dependent on capability required by the worker. Research into similar models has been completed and the framework for Trauma Informed Practice, as introduced by NHS Scotland, would provide a suitable outline. This framework has a differentiated approach to workforce practice levels, including: 'informed', 'skilled', 'enhanced' and 'specialist'. Further information on the NHS Scotland framework can be found at <https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/education-and-training/by-discipline/psychology/multiprofessional-psychology/national-trauma-training-framework.aspx>

3.14 Reviewing commissioning arrangements

It is advised that the review of commissioning arrangements is on-hold until co-production of the domestic abuse strategy has been completed. The strategy will inform commissioning decisions. In the interim period existing commissions will continue.

3.15 Reviewing the perpetrator pathway and programmes

Pathways to support all persons affected by domestic abuse will be reviewed through workstream activity as part of the development of the new strategy, however, introducing programmes for perpetrators will not be delayed. It is widely acknowledged by partners and through external scrutiny that the lack of perpetrator programmes needs to be addressed immediately. In partnership with SafeLives and Merseyside Police, Wirral has been successful in a bid to be part of a pilot for the Drive programme, which is an early intervention approach for perpetrators. The expression of interest was submitted in December 2019 and notification of the successful bid received in February 2020. Further details regarding timescales and number of programmes will be provided as soon as possible.

3.16 Establish a relevant data set to measure impact

The revised performance information will include both operational and strategic datasets. The operational dataset will allow performance monitoring for individual cases to be more robust. The dataset will enable an improved understanding of local demand and how well services are meeting needs. Full details of the proposed operational dataset are included in Appendix 2- Performance Data. Data to populate the scorecard will be sourced at a local level using appropriate and reliable information system extracts.

3.17 The strategic dataset will utilise national data made available by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and the Home Office. It will provide an overview of how well Wirral is performing at a strategic level in relation to domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes. This dataset will help inform partnership working and targeting

of resources. Full details of the proposed strategic dataset are included in Appendix 2- Performance Data.

- 3.18 We will be introducing a cohort tracker as well as a new performance data set. The cohort tracker will allow individual cases to be monitored and provide a better understanding of outcomes and give direction for targeting services. The cohort tracker will be maintained and managed through the domestic abuse hub.
- 3.19 All the above areas will be kept under review and a follow up report provided to Elected Members in three months.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report, however, following co-production of the new strategy, there may be financial implications which cannot be quantified at the time of presenting this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report. Whilst the co-production activity takes place, existing commissioning and contractual arrangements will be extended using and adhering to existing Council procurement procedures.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report, however, following co-production of the new strategy, it is anticipated that there may be resource implications in relation to staffing, workforce development and ICT provision. These will be fully considered through development of the strategy and accompanying action plan.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 There are no relevant risks associated with this report. Services for people affected by domestic abuse will continue to be provided, with appropriate systems, processes and supervision in place whilst development of the strategy and activity to improve services continues. A risk log is maintained to mitigate any potential negative impact.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 As detailed in sections 3.1 to 3.5, engagement and consultation are being undertaken with stakeholders. The co-production approach seeks to involve all stakeholders, particularly service-users in every aspect of design, development, implementation and review. At this stage it has been agreed that the views and experiences of children and young people affected by domestic abuse will be sourced from existing national research publications. This decision is based upon the sensitivity of the subject matter and lack of local expertise in conducting such consultation work. Publications such as "*Are They Shouting Because of Me?*", published by the Children's Commissioner in 2018, provide insight into the

experiences and voice of children and young people and will be used to inform developments.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 It is recognised that a disproportionate number of victims of domestic abuse have protected characteristics of the nine groups protected under the Equality Act 2010. Expertise is being provided to the co-production of the strategy and will be evident in each of the subsequent workstreams. A full Equality Impact Assessment will be completed for the new strategy and accompanying action plan.

9.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the existing strategy and can be found via the following link:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments/equality-impact-assessments-2017-1>

10.0 ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental and climate implications arising from this report.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Governance arrangements for domestic abuse
Appendix 2 - Performance Data

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The previous domestic abuse strategy, delivered through the Wirral Plan: A 2020 Vision, can be accessed at <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/about-council/wirral-plan-2020-vision/wirral-plan-strategies#overlay-context=about-council/wirral-plan-2020-vision>

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee	November 2019